

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT  
MAY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION  
SEPTEMBER 2001

## 3E's Enterprises (Trading) Ltd



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

### **Adult Learning Inspectorate**

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### **Grading**

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

## SUMMARY

The original inspection of 3E's Enterprises Ltd was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website ([www.ali.gov.uk](http://www.ali.gov.uk)).

**3E's Enterprises (Trading) Ltd offers good training in care. Learners have good work placements where they receive sound training and carry out a wide range of tasks. Learners and employers are highly aware of their responsibility to uphold equality of opportunity. Complaints are handled well. Learners receive excellent support. The arrangements for initial assessment and induction are good. A small team of staff manages training well. Training provided by subcontractors is monitored closely. Quality assurance policies and procedures are comprehensive and sound. Staff have implemented the action plan for improving training well. Some learners, however, have not received enough assessments of their key skills. Arrangements for gathering feedback about the quality of training are not systematic enough.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	4
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	1
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training
- ◆ good support for learners with additional needs
- ◆ good arrangements for initial assessment

- ◆ excellent pastoral support
- ◆ good understanding of equal opportunities among learners and employers
- ◆ good communications
- ◆ good monitoring of subcontractors
- ◆ comprehensive and sound quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ good use of action-planning

**KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ no completion of the apprenticeship framework by any learner
- ◆ no systematic arrangements for gathering feedback on the quality of training

## INTRODUCTION

1. 3E's Enterprises (Trading) Ltd (3E's) is a wholly owned subsidiary of City Technology College, Kingshurst. It was formed in 1990 to be a link between the college and the local businesses and community it serves. At the time of the original inspection 3E's held a contract with the former Birmingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide work-based training. At that time, it had eight learners in business administration, five in management and professional services, nine in customer service and 26 in early years care. The original inspection covered early years care only. In addition, 3E's also provided the employment option of New Deal. Three clients were working to complete NVQ units in early years care, three in playwork and one in customer service. At the time of the reinspection, the company was under contract to the Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based training. Currently, there are 68 learners. Two are advanced modern apprentices in business administration and three are learners working towards an NVQ in business administration. Seven modern apprentices are working towards management qualifications at level 3. There are 23 advanced modern apprentices, five foundation modern apprentices and 28 NVQ learners working towards NVQs in early years care at levels 2 and 3. There is a new team of staff with a new training manager. There are 12 staff in total, of whom six have full-time posts. In addition to its training provision, 3E's offers a range of other services to the local and business community. These include nursery provision, Internet services and educational consultancy and school regeneration. Management of the whole company is the responsibility of the associate director.

2. Learners come to 3E's from Solihull and Birmingham. Since the original inspection, unemployment rates in this area have decreased from 14 per cent to 5.6 per cent. In Solihull, the current unemployment rate is 2.6 per cent and in Birmingham it is 7.7 per cent. The unemployment rate for men is higher than it is for women. It is also higher for people from minority ethnic groups than for people from the rest of the local population. The proportion of people in the area who are from minority ethnic groups is 2.9 per cent but in some parts of Solihull this figure is higher.

3. Over 70 per cent of employment in the Birmingham area is in service industries, with over 20 per cent of jobs in public administration, health and education and a similar proportion in banking, finance and insurance. The distribution sector and hotels and restaurants provide just under 20 per cent of jobs. The remaining employment is in production and construction, and mostly in manufacturing. At the time of the reinspection, the manufacturing industry in the area was experiencing some recession but the service sector had grown. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Birmingham was 40.9 per cent, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, 40.8 per cent of school leavers achieved five GCSEs grades at C or above, compared with the national

average of 49.2 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The self-assessment report was drawn up by the development manager. All staff were involved in identifying strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment process was overseen by the associate director. The report gave a good description of the training provided by 3E's. Many of the strengths identified in the report, however, were no more than normal practice. The grades for generic aspects in the self-assessment report were, in the main, higher than those awarded by the inspection.

5. The new training manager, working with the staff and subcontractors produced the self-assessment report for the reinspection. This self-assessment report focused on progress made in implementing the action plan produced after the original inspection. It was updated in May and August, 2001. Inspectors agreed with the findings in the self-assessment report relating to progress in rectifying each of the weaknesses identified in the original inspection. They agreed with the grades in the self-assessment report for equal opportunities, management of training and quality assurance but awarded a higher grade for trainee support than that given by the company.

6. Three inspectors spent a total of nine days with 3E's. Inspectors interviewed 26 learners and 11 supervisors or employers. They conducted one interview with off-the-job management staff, 13 interviews with the provider's staff and one with the subcontractor's staff. Inspectors looked at 32 learners' files and 14 portfolios. They studied other documents, including TEC contracts, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance documents, minutes of meetings and promotional materials. Inspectors observed two training sessions and awarded a grade to one of them. They also observed one assessment and two reviews of learners' progress.

7. For the reinspection, two inspectors spent a total of eight days with the provider. They interviewed 21 learners, seven employers and held 13 interviews with staff including three subcontractors. They observed two training sessions, which were graded 2 and 3. Inspectors looked at 18 learners' NVQ portfolios, learners' files, policies and procedures, training materials, management data, minutes of meetings, analysis of feedback from learners and employers, reports of external verifiers and promotional leaflets.

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Health, care & public services

### Grade 2

8. 3E's offers training leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education. There are 32 trainees of whom five are national trainees, one a modern apprentice and six are New Deal clients. The remaining 20 trainees are on other youth training programmes. Twenty-two trainees are undertaking an NVQ at level 2 with the remainder working towards an NVQ at level 3. The trainee on the modern apprenticeship programme is employed, as are some trainees on other programmes. Trainees are placed in one of 15 privately owned day nurseries or schools. All trainees live near their placements. Both members of the 3E's care support team are occupationally qualified. Many of the workplace supervisors are qualified assessors, 3E's assessors carry out all on-the-job assessment for 3E's trainees. Some on-the-job training is given by the placement supervisors. Trainees attend off-the-job training once a week at the 3E's premises. Trainees who need extra help or support are seen on a one-to-one basis as required. Trainees are able to follow additional off-the-job training courses leading to qualifications which complement their NVQs. These include qualifications in first aid, child protection and food hygiene courses. Trainees are visited in placement every three months for their formal reviews. At other times, contact is maintained by telephone and through the weekly training sessions. The retention rate is 75 per cent and above the average in the local TEC area. In 1998-99 the trainees' achievement rates were 80 per cent and in the current year to date, they are 32 per cent. Some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report represented no more than normal practice, or belonged in a generic area. Inspectors identified further strengths and agreed with the grade in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training
- ◆ comprehensive and well-structured portfolios
- ◆ demanding targets for trainees and clients

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ delay in assessing some trainees' key skills

9. The majority of placements for trainees in childcare are well resourced and offer trainees opportunities to gain work experience. Trainees have access to qualified staff, good equipment and relevant training materials. Trainees are given the opportunity to receive a broad range of work experience across all the required age ranges. If a placement, such as a school nursery, cannot provide the requisite range of experience, staff second trainees to other placements. Communication between placements and 3E's is good and staff in placements are well satisfied with both the calibre of the trainees and the quality of the training they receive.

Trainees are given the opportunity to attend up to three interviews before they decide which placement they want to use. In practice, the majority of trainees choose after one interview because 3E's review placements carefully, matching the trainee's needs to the placement. Many of the work-based supervisors are qualified assessors, and although they do not assess 3E's trainees, their knowledge of the whole NVQ process enables them to monitor trainees' progress carefully and provide useful on-the-job training and feedback.

10. Off-the-job training takes place once a week on Monday for level 2 trainees and on Friday for level 3. There is an additional opportunity on one day each week, for trainees to receive additional help on a one-to-one basis. The training programme follows the academic year, beginning in September. Trainees know which NVQ units they must obtain. They have a clear timetable showing the dates by which they must complete the units. Off-the-job training is well structured and varied. Tutors use a variety of teaching methods. Examples of trainees' work are on display in the training room. All subjects covered are clearly related to the particular element or unit being addressed. Trainees are encouraged to be as fully involved as possible in the learning process and tutors use different methods and activities to help trainees to acquire the theoretical knowledge and evidence they need in order to obtain their NVQs. Priority is given to ensuring trainees perceive the link between on- and off-the-job training. Trainees have a clear understanding of the relationship between the two and how they complement each other.

11. Portfolios are well constructed to show a wide range of evidence relating to each element and unit. Trainees' progress is clearly recorded and training plans are drawn up on a weekly basis so that trainees are always aware of their progress and the evidence they need to collect at any one time. Trainees are taught to be as thorough and rigorous as possible in collating their evidence. The evidence in their portfolios is broad in its scope. Trainees at level 3 are responsible for drawing up their own assessment plans as part of their NVQ and level 2 trainees are also encouraged to acquire this skill.

12. Trainees are kept well informed of the extent of their progress. They are set, and agree to, realistic targets each week. Training plans are used well. Where trainees are slipping behind, extra help or support is given both by assessor/tutors and workplace supervisors.

13. The programme with its fixed start and finishing points at the beginning and end of the academic year, does not suit the needs of trainees who wish to participate in it on a roll-on, roll-off basis. Trainees who start after the beginning of the academic year sometimes have difficulty in catching up on the work already covered. Trainees who enrol at other times join the off-the-job course which has already started, then catch up on missed lessons when they are held in the next academic year. Some trainees have chosen not to do this, as they have insufficient confidence to join an already established group. These trainees then have to wait until the next September to start their theory training. Trainees then spend many months in their placement before they are assessed. Modern apprentices have had to wait to complete their key skills assessments because the member of staff who



was responsible for this aspect of training left the company. Another member of staff will shortly take over responsibility for key skills training.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 2**

14. 3E's has an equal opportunities policy that has been updated since the last inspection. Copies of this are given to learners during the induction process and to employers as part of their information pack. All learners are made aware of their employers' policy on equal opportunities. Grievance and harassment procedures are effective. At the time of the reinspection, 65 of the 68 learners were women and four were from a minority ethnic group. There were no learners with disabilities.

The main weaknesses identified by the original inspection were:

- ◆ inadequate policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities
- ◆ little promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ little staff training in equal opportunities
- ◆ no monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

15. Improvements have been made in accordance with the action plan drawn up after the original inspection. All the weaknesses identified in the original inspection have been rectified. Staff are making every effort to ensure that employers understand the company's policy on equal opportunities. The company requires employers to have a clear policy to promote equal opportunities and ensure that learners are fully aware of this. Improvements have been made to the way equal opportunities data are collected. Staff have undergone training on equal opportunities. Equality of opportunity is now a standing agenda item at staff meetings. 3E's has a clear and well-written complaints and disciplinary procedure. Inspectors did not agree with some of the findings in the self-assessment report. They considered one of the new-found strengths to be a continuing weakness. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### **STRENGTHS**

- ◆ good understanding of equal opportunities amongst learners and employers
- ◆ good complaints and appeal procedures

### **WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ no specific action to recruit learners from under-represented groups

16. Work placement staff, employers and sub-contractors are fully involved in the training process. They are made aware of the rights and responsibilities of learners and of 3E's policies on equal opportunities. During learners' induction and

learners' progress reviews, prominent reference is made to equal opportunities. Staff in the learners' work placements are involved in the learners' induction and in learners' progress reviews and they can attend meetings of 3E's training staff if they so wish. Staff give high priority to ensuring that equality of opportunity is promoted and upheld in the company and in work placements. Learners working towards NVQs in childcare have to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities in the context of this occupational area. Staff continually remind these learners of their own rights and responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities.

17. 3E's has an effective complaints and appeals procedure. For learners who are employed, this is closely linked to the procedure used in their workplace. Learners and their employers are aware that learners have separate rights and responsibilities, as learners and employees, respectively. During their induction, the grievance procedure is explained to learners orally and in writing in an information pack they are given. Communications between the company and employers are good and it is usually possible for complaints to be dealt with satisfactorily without invoking the full complaints procedure. Currently, however, one complaint is being dealt with through implementation of the procedure. It is being handled professionally, efficiently and calmly.

18. Some learners are referred to the company by the careers service. Others have responded to the company's advertisements, or have acted on word-of-mouth recommendation by friends or relatives. The recruitment process is effective and training vacancies are filled quickly. The company is drawing up plans to promote training to under-represented groups on its programmes. Marketing materials have been revised to ensure that they reflect the company's policy on equal opportunities and appeal to both sexes, people from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 1**

19. All prospective learners are invited to an initial interview. During that interview, they undergo an initial assessment which measures their interest in and aptitude for their chosen occupation. Successful applicants are offered up to three interviews with different work-placement providers in order that they may find a work placement which suits them. All learners are given an induction, during which they are informed of their rights and responsibilities. The induction takes place over two days. Learners are assessed at least every three to four weeks in their workplace. Learners on care programmes have weekly training sessions at 3E's. Business administration learners come into 3E's once a month. They receive other training, for example, in information technology and key skills, when it is identified that they need this. Learners have access to the full range of facilities on offer at the City Technology College.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate induction for some learners
- ◆ no key skill assessment
- ◆ no basic skills assessment
- ◆ failure to update most learners' initial training plan

20. 3E's has rectified these weaknesses satisfactorily. The induction process is now carefully structured and is carried out well. All learners who have joined programmes recently receive assessment of their key skills from the outset of their training. Staff are carrying out assessment of the key skills of those learners who missed out on this assessment earlier. Basic skills assessment is now completed during induction. Individual learning plans are now updated regularly. Inspectors agreed with the new strengths in trainee support identified in the self-assessment report, which had been achieved since the original inspection. They awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good arrangements for initial assessment
- ◆ well-structured induction
- ◆ excellent pastoral support
- ◆ effective reviews of learners' progress

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no significant weaknesses

21. Initial assessment takes place on three occasions. At their first interview, applicants have to give written answers to questions designed by 3E's to determine the extent of their knowledge and interest in their chosen occupational area and test their literacy skills. 3E's staff are occupationally qualified and experienced in recruitment. Applicants are carefully interviewed to determine their interests and to ensure that they are choosing a suitable career path for them. Once applicants have been accepted, their basic skills are assessed. Their key skills are also assessed early on in the programme. All initial assessment results are recorded, discussed with the learners concerned, and taken into account when drawing up individual learning plans. Action plans are drawn up to provide additional learning support for those learners needing it. There is an effective process for identifying achievements and any relevant experience learners already have. Learners are given appropriate credit for their prior learning.

22. All learners take part in an induction programme. This takes place over two days at 3E's centre. Learners who are employed receive broadly the same induction programme in their workplace. The induction timetable has been carefully put together. Sessions include: an introduction to the company; exercises to encourage learners to get to know each other; a presentation on the attitudes and

responsible behaviour expected of learners in the workplace; discussion of policies and procedures relating to the learners in the workplace; an overview of the company and the grievance procedure, a thorough introduction to health and safety and equal opportunities, and a comprehensive introduction to the NVQ process. Learners are able to recall the content of their induction programme and what they learn. Some issues covered during induction are also referred to again during learners' progress reviews and in discussions between company staff and learners. These discussions involve the learners, employers or work-placement providers. All learners are given a handbook. Time is taken to ensure that they understand its content and their rights and responsibilities as learners. 3E's has a 'trainee charter' which is given to learners and also included in the packs of publicity materials.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*One employed learner working towards a management NVQ was very busy in her work and was unable to attend the key skills sessions at the training centre. Her tutor/assessor worked with her outside working hours on both the NVQ and key skills. The tutor let the learner use her laptop computer to gain information technology skills. The learner valued the additional support she was receiving. She was highly motivated to succeed and was making good progress towards completing her apprenticeship.*

23. The learners are given excellent support. They receive good off-the-job training. Employers are supportive of learners and staff training. Learners benefit from excellent pastoral support. Staff make themselves available to learners in and out of normal working hours and will provide whatever help is needed to help them succeed. All assessment is carried out on the job at regular intervals, and usually about once a fortnight. Staff have regular contact with learners on both a formal and informal basis. There is excellent communication between 3E's staff and work-based supervisors. Employers are kept informed of learners' progress, are encouraged to provide witness testimonies of learners' competence and help learners identify assessment opportunities in the workplace. 3E's have introduced a rolling induction and training programme to enable learners to join the organisation at any time during the year. The progress of learners is constantly monitored and any difficulties learners have are picked up and dealt with immediately. The staff of 3E's have built up excellent and productive relationships with learners, employers and work-placement providers. Investigation into any problems or additional learning needs learners may have is prompt and effective. 3E's staff provide learners with careers advice to enable them to make decisions about their futures. Every effort is made to help learners in work placements to secure full-time employment with their work-placement provider. Local employers, particularly in child care, hold the learners in high regard and offer them full-time jobs.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*A learner who was within a few months of completing her training became seriously ill. The learner was keen to complete her NVQ. 3E's arranged additional training and assessment at her home and workplace to enable her to do this. 3E's also arranged for the awarding body to send her certificate through quickly so that she could take part in a formal presentation. The company has told her that it will offer her further support when she returns to work, even though she will no longer be a registered learner.*

24. Company staff carry out reviews of learners' progress at least once every three months. Workplace supervisors take part in the reviews. The reviews focus on learners' progress towards achieving a qualification and completing the training programme successfully. The reviews culminate with the drawing up of an action plan to help the learner make further progress over the next three months. Implementation of the action plan is monitored regularly. Staff from 3E's and work-placement supervisors make sure that the learners are carrying out their action plans fully. Employers and subcontractors are very much part of the training process and they have been encouraged to become involved with this. They are invited to attend staff meetings at 3E's that focus on training issues and many do so.

## Management of training

## Grade 2

25. A training and development manager who joined the company in January 2001 manages 3E's. She reports to the associate director of 3E's group of companies who in turn, reports to a board of directors. The board meets quarterly and consists of local business representatives. Since the original inspection, a new team has been appointed. There are 12 staff in total and six have full-time appointments. There are two tutor/assessors for early years care training and one also serves as the key skills co-ordinator. There are two subcontractors for business administration. One subcontractor is the tutor/assessor and the other is the internal verifier. A subcontractor from a private nursery provides training for 23 of the 68 learners and another contractor provides training leading to NVQs in management.

At the original inspection the following weaknesses were identified:

- ◆ lack of clarity in management arrangements
- ◆ inadequate policies and procedures
- ◆ no key skills training
- ◆ poor management of subcontractors
- ◆ failure to use management information in decision-making

26. All these weaknesses have been rectified. In particular, the management of training is now effective. New management structures and procedures are clear. Better use is now made of management information. The company has a business plan which identifies opportunities for growth and clear objectives for work-based learning. Staffing procedures are satisfactory. Appraisals have taken place and records are maintained of training provided for staff. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the provider and with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good communications
- ◆ clear targets for training
- ◆ good monitoring of subcontractors

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no completion of the apprenticeship framework by any learner
- ◆ insufficient key skills assessment

27. There is good communication between the team and the learners and the employers. Staff meet regularly to discuss the implementation of action plans, learners' progress and the performance of the company in meeting contractual requirements. There are also meetings of trainers, assessors and internal verifiers. The minutes of these meetings are made available to all staff. At these meetings, staff from different occupational areas share good practice. For example, staff

from 3E's and the main subcontractor providing care training, have shared methods of NVQ assessment which they have found to be particularly effective, such as the direct observation of learners' work. The training team is clearly accountable to the managing director and the board. The manager provides written reports to the managing director on the operational issues. She then meets with the managing director each week to discuss these. The manager made a presentation on the work-based learning at the last board meeting. There is an annual ceremony at which certificates are presented to learners and this is well attended. Members of the team work well together in an open plan office where there is a professional and friendly atmosphere. Staff enjoy working at 3E's.

28. All learners are set clear targets. Staff take responsibility for ensuring that learners achieve their targets. They report on learners' progress at regular meetings of the training team. At these meetings, any problems learners may have are discussed. Recently, the staff agreed performance indicators against which they can measure learners' performance. They discuss the company's progress in meetings its contractual targets. Learners know the target dates by which they must achieve their NVQ and key skills certification. Employers are aware of these dates as well.

29. All subcontractors receive reviews of their work from the training manager and the associate director. Following one of these reviews, one subcontractor's contract was not renewed. It is made plain to subcontractors that they must put the interests of learners before their own. Subcontractors are given a contract which specifies the code of professional conduct they must follow, requirements for the monitoring of their provision, and the objectives they must achieve. The subcontractors attend team meetings and discuss learner's progress. The manager has accompanied the subcontractors while they train and assess learners. Subcontractors observe learners as they carry out their work and they give them feedback on their performance. The manager has worked closely with the subcontractor from the private nurseries to ensure standards of training are high. The subcontractors have a positive attitude towards the company and are delighted with its new and clear management system.

30. Since the original inspection, none of the learners has completed a modern apprenticeship. There are currently 32 advanced modern apprentices and five foundation modern apprentices. These learners are not scheduled to complete their training until next year. Some learners have achieved NVQs since the original inspection and staff are working hard to help learners complete the apprenticeship framework. Eleven learners are working towards NVQs at level 2 in early years care and are scheduled to complete their apprenticeship framework in the next two weeks. Some learners who were interviewed during the reinspection had also been interviewed during the original inspection and they had made little significant progress since then. In the last year, 22 per cent of all learners left the programme without achieving any qualifications.

31. Learners on modern apprenticeship programmes receive insufficient assessment of their key skills. There are 37 learners who need to achieve key skills

qualifications to complete their training successfully. Until May of this year, no member of staff was responsible for key skills training and assessment. Some progress has been made in providing learners with key skills training and assessment. Learners have received initial assessment of their key skills. They have agreed action plans for improving their key skills. Some learners have gathered evidence of their competence in key skills for their portfolios and this has been assessed. Many learners, however, who have not joined 3E's recently, have been assessed in key skills at the end of their training programme, rather than throughout it.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

32. Quality assurance is the responsibility of all members of the training team. 3E's meets the quality assurance requirements of the local LSC and three awarding bodies. The City Technology College, of which 3E's is a subsidiary part, was accredited with the Investors in People standard this year.

At the original inspection the main weaknesses were:

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ poor use of existing procedures
- ◆ no targets for improving the quality of training
- ◆ little sharing of best practice
- ◆ no systematic use of data in planning for continuous improvement

33. Action has been taken to rectify all but one of these weaknesses. A quality assurance system has been developed, targets for the improvement of training have been agreed and staff now share best practice. The use of data has improved since the original inspection but data are not analysed to identify trends. Procedures for assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Staff meet regularly to review learners' portfolios. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the updated self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ comprehensive and sound quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ good action-planning

### ***WEAKNESSES***

- ◆ no systematic arrangements for gathering feedback on the quality of training
- ◆ no analysis of data to identify trends

34. 3E's has a comprehensive set of quality assurance policies and procedures. These have been developed over the past seven months by the team, with help

from a consultant. Members of the team identified their current monitoring practices across all aspects of the company's business, including the evaluation of training, staff procedures, self-assessment and quality control. These practices were recorded. They were then reviewed and became the basis from which the quality assurance system and quality assurance policies and procedures were developed. These policies and procedures have been reviewed regularly at team meetings and are set out in a staff handbook for full-time and subcontracted staff. The procedures are detailed and thorough and there is careful management control over the documents used for quality assurance. Each member of staff has a copy of the handbook and a master copy is kept in the open-plan office. Staff follow the procedures in their work.

35. Members of the training team have made good use of the action plan for improving provision, which was drawn up after the original inspection. The company's self-assessment process has focused on progress in rectifying weaknesses identified through the last inspection. Updated versions of the action plan were produced in May and August 2001. Members of the team have worked well together in co-ordinating the implementation of the action plan. They prioritised actions in terms of their potential benefit to learners. For example, better assessment of the skills and improved arrangements for reviews of learners' progress were given high priority. Monitoring of the implementation of the action has been carried out each month. Reports on the effectiveness of the action plan are made regularly to the associate director and the board. A strong team has developed and the subcontractors are members of this. The training and development manager was the first member of the new team to be appointed in January of this year and has worked particularly hard to rectify the weaknesses identified through the original inspection.

36. Arrangements for gathering feedback on the quality of training are unsystematic. A feedback questionnaire was sent to learners and employers in July and August. The proportions of learners and, in particular employers, who answered this were low. Learners have also been asked to respond to questionnaires about their induction process and key skills workshops. Their responses to these are summarised and discussed at staff meetings. Since the original inspection, however, anonymous and objective feedback on the quality of the company's provision has not been gathered from interested parties, such as staff, subcontractors and funding bodies.

37. The data on learners consist mainly of the target dates by which learners must achieve their qualifications, and targets relating to learners which are set in the contract with the local LSC. Staff do not maintain and analyse data on learners' performance each year, such as learners' achievement and retention rates. The company has insufficient statistical information on learners' performance for the purposes of quality assurance.